

Message Text

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ACTION OC-06

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 0218

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR ACOM SY IT

SUBJECT: POUCH FACILITIES FOR DAMASCUS

REF: BEIRUT 0142

1. EMBOFF JANUARY 7 CALLED ON RESPONSIBLE FONOFF OFFICIAL (TORELLA), WHO HIMSELF HAD RECEIVED CABLE JANUARY 6 FROM ITALIAN EMBASSY DAMASCUS ON SUBJECT, TO DISCUSS QUESTION OF POUCH FACILITIES RAISED IN REFTEL. ITALIAN EMBASSY CABLE ALSO TOUCHED ON OTHER ASPECTS OF STATUS OF US INTERESTS SECTION WHICH SEEMINGLY HAVE LEFT AMBASSADOR BUCCI IN SOME CONFUSION.

2. ON POUCH QUESTION, BUCCI'S CABLE INDICATED INTEREST IN OFFERING USE OF ITALIAN FACILITIES TO HELP US INTEREST SECTION PENDING APPROVAL FROM SYRIAN AUTHORITIES FOR DIPLOMATIC POUCH PRIVILEGES. HOWEVER, CONTRARY TO DIFFICULTY SET FORTH PARA 2 REFTEL (ITALIAN REGULATIONS EXCLUDE ITALIAN POUCH BEING CARRIED BY FOREIGN NATIONALS), MAIN PROBLEM AS EXPLAINED BY BUCCI IS THAT, AS HE UNDERSTANDS, ITALIAN POUCH CANNOT CONTAIN FOREIGN CLASSIFIED MATERIAL. AFTER CHECK WITH FONOFF POUCH OFFICIALS, TORELLA CONFIRMED THAT REGULATIONS STRICTLY PROHIBIT ITALIAN POUCH BEING ACCOMPANIED BY FOREIGN NATIONAL. AT SAME TIME, TORELLA WAS TOLD THAT THERE IS NOTHING IN REGULATIONS AGAINST INCLUSION OF FOREIGN CLASSIFIED MATERIAL IN ITALIAN POUCH. CONSEQUENTLY, BOTH TORELLA AND EMBOFF CAME TO CONCLUSION THAT POSSIBLE SOLUTION TO PROBLEM WOULD BE FOR ITALIAN EMBASSY DAMASCUS TO ACCEPT US CLASSIFIED MATERIAL FOR ITALIAN POUCH WHICH COULD THEN BE TAKEN TO BEIRUT BY ITALIAN

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COURIER IN COMPANY OF US COURIER. TORELLA IS CHECKING FURTHER

ON THIS AND, IF NO PROBLEMS CROP UP, WILL SEND INSTRUCTIONS
TO BUCC ALONG THIS LINE.

3. BUCCI IS APPARENTLY CONCERNED BY UNCERTAINTY OVER POUCH
AND OTHER MATTERS WHICH CAUSE HIM TO FEAR COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING
NOT REACHED AT TIME OF US-SYRIAN AGREEMENT TO MAN INTEREST
SECTIONS BY THEIR OWN NATIONALS. AS EXAMPLE, AMBASSADOR BUCCI
RAISED QUESTION OF SCOTES STATUS VIS-A-VIS THE SYRIANS. ACCORDING
SCOTES AND AS INDICATED IN SECRETARY'S LETTER TO PRESIDENT
ASSAD, SCOTES WILL HEAD U.S. INTEREST SECTION. ON OTHER HAND,
BUCCI NOTED IN HIS TELEGRAM, DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER ISMAIL
HAD CONVEYED IMPRESSION THAT HEAD OF SECTION WILL BE ITALIAN
OFFICER.

4. AS A RESULT OF THESE APPARENT AMBIGUITIES, BUCCI HAS
ASKED FONOFF TO SEEK CLARIFICATION AS TO PRECISE FUNCTIONS
AND PRIVILEGES (ESPECIALLY AS REGARDS FULL RANGE OF
COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES) OF U.S. INTEREST SECTION AS LAID
DOWN IN US-SYRIAN AGREEMENT. LACK OF SUCH CLARIFICATION,
TORELLA POINTED OUT, COULD CAUSE AWKWARD SITUATIONS NOT ONLY
FOR AMERICANS AND SYRIANS BUT FOR ITALIANS AS WELL.

5. COMMENT: WE DO NOT KNOW IF SOLUTION PROPOSED IN PARA 2
WOULD SOLVE USINT TEMPORARY POUCH PROBLEM BUT, IN VIEW OF
ITALIAN POUCH REGULATIONS, IT APPEARS FROM HERE TO OFFER
BEST QUICK AND PRACTICAL SOLUTION. DEPARTMENT AND BEIRUT
MAY WISH TO COMMENT. VOLPE

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